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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Success for All Program and items that need be considered when the program is implemented in elementary schools. The program includes one-to-one tutoring; frequent assessment; a family support team; innovative curriculum approaches in reading, writing, and language arts; and other interventions. Discussion expands on variables important to program replication, including: (1) characteristics of the proposed change; (2) three contextual variables that appear to be important at the school level; (3) six significant factors that are controlled at the district level; and (4) two factors external to the school system that influence the success of new programs. A program facilitator guides implementation of the Success for All Program in each new school site. The facilitator teaches new strategies, coaches teachers, maintains an inventory of materials, manages periodic assessments, forms instructional groups, coordinates the work of tutors and reading teachers, and participates in grade group and family support team meetings. The facilitator ensures that the program provides for each child a web of supportive services that assures success. A facilitator's typical day is described. (RH)

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IMPLEMENTING COMPLEX CHANGE IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Each September, nearly ten thousand six-year-olds enter first grade in the Baltimore City Public Schools. Just about every one of these students is full of enthusiasm and confidence. Just about every one is absolutely sure he or she is going to succeed in school. Just about every one thinks he or she is a gift to the school system, and, of course, every one is right.

Nine months later in June, despite the best efforts of dedicated teachers, a lot of these bright, motivated, lively kids have gotten some bad news. Almost one in five (19%) has failed first grade. Many more have just barely passed and know that they are not doing well in their full-time job of being a student. Although they and their teachers work hard, a certain proportion of students find out in their early elementary years that their high expectations for themselves are simply wrong. This does not occur only in Baltimore or in other big-city school systems; it occurs in virtually every district that has a relatively high proportion of students with greater-than-average needs but less-than-average resources. One reason such widespread failure occurs is that teachers and students are working in programs that do not have the power to meet the educational challenges they face. The programs are not designed with the scope, structure, and integration of elements that can assure success.

Four years ago, Baltimore educators and researchers from The Johns Hopkins University teamed up to find a way to help all elementary students master reading and other basic skills. The result of this collaboration is a program called *Success For all.* The program includes one-to-one tutoring, innovative curriculum approaches in reading, writing and language arts, frequent assessment, a family support team, and other interventions. Briefly, students begin school in prekindergarten with developmentally appropriate activities, which build the social and intellectual foundation for more formal studies. Formal lessons in reading begin late in kindergarten, emphasizing sound and letter recognition, sound blending and phonics, using games, songs, writing, reading to partners and, story-telling (Madden et al, 1989). First graders move on to work in basal readers, using an adaptation of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC; Stevens et al., 1987). Slow starters in first grade are boosted by one-to-one tutoring in daily 20-minute sessions with teacher-tutors. The modified CIRC program is used through fifth grade. Students in grades one through five are grouped homogeneously for reading instruction, with frequent assessments to maintain appropriate placements. The goal is to help each child start school with success and maintain that success throughout the elementary years. Results from the first two years of the program have shown substantial gains in reading and reductions in special education referrals and retentions, in comparison with similar control schools (Slavin et al., 1990; Slavin et al., in press).

Each element of *Success For All* makes sense and is based on solid research. However, many well-designed programs have failed when transplanted out of the schools that piloted them and into new sites. Those who have studied educational innovation (e.g., Berman and McLaughlin, 1978) suggest that the cause of this failure to replicate is found

in the process of implementation. For a program to work in each new site, educators there must learn how to harness their particular resources and skills to the program. Effective implementation occurs only when a school makes a program its own, which involves making the small adaptations that capitalize on the special talents and insights of the staff. This process of developing ownership and expertise involves the support of district personnel at the central office as well. Put another way, we believe that all Baltimore first graders would be able to live up to their dreams of school success if teachers were using an appropriate, high-quality program and taking advantage of all their personal and professional talents and if administrative decisions supported teachers' work in this program. The process of program implementation must enable teachers as well as students to do their best.

Reflecting on what has been observed in schools that try ambitious new programs, Fullan (1982) comments that most of what we come to know about implementation is discovered by doing it. The initial unknowns involve both school-level and district-level issues. For example, *Success For All* can and does specify which instructional and non-instructional roles must be filled, but it cannot predict how the needs of individual children and the skills of individual professionals may best be matched. Likewise, the program can and does specify in reasonable detail what materials are needed for each lesson, in what sequence lessons should be offered, and what kinds of lesson activities will be the most productive in general. However, it cannot give guidance on the daily decisions that govern individual circumstances. Furthermore, *Success For All* is affected by such things as working conditions, administrative activities, scheduling, and resource allocation decisions

in ways that can foreseen generally, but that must be managed in relation to particular contexts, with particular people and arrangements.

Fullan (1982, pp. 55-75) identifies 15 factors that affect implementation. He sorts them into four categories dealing with the nature of the proposed change itself and of the district, school, and external influences. His reading of the research on innovation leads him to hypotheses about the ways in which each factor can have the most positive effect on implementation.

The characteristics of the change, according to Fullan, ought to include obvious relevance to the problem, sufficient clarity to enable effective action, complexity suited to the nature of the problem, and design that is well-conceived and deliverable under real-world conditions. The initial decision to adopt the innovation ought to have considered these dimensions carefully. In addition, those bringing the innovation to the implementers ought to be able to demonstrate its adequacy with reference to those dimensions.

At the school level, three contextual variables appear important. First, strong support of the principal is essential. While principals may not know every detail, they must make the success of the innovation a high priority in their allocation of time and resources as well as in their rhetoric. Furthermore, principals will lead better if they also have support for their own efforts to integrate the demands of the new program with the other ongoing demands of running a school. Second, teachers need time to talk with each other about the new procedures, to solve problems together and help each other learn how to be effective. Third, overall conditions of work must help teachers build and maintain feelings of professional efficacy. Without the conviction that going to the trouble to learn

a new program will indeed help the children they care about, teachers will find it hard to invest the required effort. (See also Ashton & Webb, 1986)

The school's capacity to implement effectively is influenced significantly by six factors controlled at the district level. First is the district's history: If "improvement" appears to teachers to have been defined historically as adoption of the fad-of-the-year, they tend to take a dim view of this year's propositions. The process of implementation must be geared to earn their serious commitment. Second is the process of adoption itself. No matter who made the decision--assuming the decision-making group's constitution has at least local acceptance--it must be plainly sensible and wise. Teachers must see that their legitimate concerns have been addressed by the process. Third is the support of the central office personnel. Strong and knowledgeable leadership from the superintendent and staff assures that adequate attention will be paid to making the innovation work. Fourth, staff development must include not only start-up training but continuing opportunities for implementers to learn and share new information about the new program. Additionally, they must participate in settling questions about implementation. Fifth, the timeframe for putting the new program into practice must accommodate local conditions, and data collection and analysis should help solve specific problems related to school improvement. Finally, conditions in the community can affect innovation. Neither dead calm or excessive turbulence provide good contexts for change.

Two factors external to the school system influence the success of a new program. Not surprisingly, one of these is the provision of resources (especially money) to pay the costs. The other is the integration of consulting services into the regular work of the

school. When outside consultants match the form of their services to the setting in which they will be used, support is more effective.

If a program is to be implemented and maintained successfully, most of the factors must be brought to influence it productively. Fullan does not hazard a guess about who should orchestrate this symphony of support or how. Rather, he points out that the factors are interrelated and that many people can affect them. Managing change means bringing the factors into alignment, starting with whichever is most susceptible to one's own efforts and extending to others as opportunity permits.

In *Success For All*, implementation is guided most intensively by a program facilitator in each school. The main job of the program facilitator is to help the staff make the program work. The facilitator teaches new strategies, coaches teachers, maintains an inventory of materials, manages periodic assessments, forms instructional groups, coordinates the work of tutors and reading teachers, participates in grade group and family support team meetings. Through these activities and others, the facilitator works with the staff to make certain that the program provides for each child a web of supportive services that assures success, beginning with solid teaching. In addition, the flexible boundaries of the facilitator's role enable him or her to influence a number of factors that affect the health of the program. Coaching and cajolery, creative requisitioning, judicious informal consultation with central office, supportive services and suggestions operate to adjust characteristics of the program, the district, the school, and the external consultants to fit the needs of the implementing staff.

The facilitator must be a master of improvisation, a navigator of uncertainty, the agent through whom occurs the "mutual adaptation" alleged by Berman and McLaughlin (1978) to be the requirement for successful innovation. With the assistance of the facilitator, each teacher is encouraged to find ways to implement *Success For All* with both fidelity and personal engagement, and thus each student is given a good opportunity to learn. With the assistance of the facilitator, teachers find themselves more adequately supported by the school and the district to do the work they have chosen.

What does this role look like? We are facilitators in *Success For All* schools. Recently we surveyed the other facilitators about their customary activities. Let us describe a typical day, one that is replicated in the journals of all our colleagues, and call this "composite facilitator" Ms. Brown.

At about 8 a.m. Ms. Brown checks in and covers a fair share of administrivia. Since reading is a special concern and since an uninitiated novice in the open-space pods of her school could cause disruption, she reviews the roster to see whether any substitutes will be teaching reading. As she notes down the assignment of today's sub, a new family comes in to enroll. While the secretary and the mother fill out forms, Ms. Brown asks the child about her reading. The second-grader says she has been working in the same book as her new homeroom teacher's reading group--a stroke of luck. Ms. Brown explains to her that she will be tested to make sure that the homeroom teacher's is the best group for her, tells her a little about the program, and assures her that she may remain with her new homeroom teacher at least for now during reading. (The secretary will give the mother a short pamphlet developed by the parent liaison that tells about *Success For All.*) Then Ms. Brown goes upstairs to confer with the substitute.

She makes a mental note as she climbs: Talk to the principal about how to arrange to draw from a smaller pool of subs, which would make it likelier that whoever came would have already learned the program.

By 8:30 Ms. Brown has managed to get as far as her office, where she drops her coat and picks up copies of the new second grade writing unit and student worksheets. While distributing them, she discovers that the second grade teachers would like her to meet with them after school and they set a time and place. On the way back to her office, Ms. Brown pauses to watch the "reading parade"--teaching assistants and resource specialists monitor the procession of children moving quietly in tune to the music of a funny alphabet song toward their reading classrooms. Just before 9:00, she settles in to watch a new third grade teacher work with an on-grade level group. Since the class will be reading a chapter from Winnie the Pooh excerpted in their basal, the teacher has elected to read the preceding chapter for the listening comprehension segment of the lesson. She winds up the discussion of characters and setting and moves the group quickly and quietly into position for the next segment, which begins with vocabulary review. The rest of the lesson goes very well, and Ms. Brown stops to offer her delighted comments, promising to follow up with a brief memo.

At 10:30 Ms. Brown finds the new second-grader and informally assesses her reading level. The student shows skill at reading the first stories in the book, but not those at the end, where her homeroom teacher's group is reading. Ms. Brown explains that the student will work more successfully with the other group, which is on a story closer to her level. Ms. Brown writes short notes to her homeroom teacher and the proposed reading teacher, and confirms the acceptability of the placement with each as she

returns the student to class. The receiving reading teacher trades recommendations--he has a student who needs to be in a higher group. Before Ms. Brown leaves the area, she settles that new placement with teachers and student and adjusts the class list for each reading group that is affected.

Shortly after 11:00, the fifth grade class greets Ms. Brown as she arrives to demonstrate the first few steps in the writing process. She starts by forming writing teams and she assigns team roles to make it easier to get started with teamwork. They have decided to write about favorite heroines, in honor of Women's History Month, so Ms. Brown has had to make some adjustments in the prototype lesson format. The students are very interested and cooperative--Ms. Brown has promised to publish their final drafts--so the lesson goes well. Ms. Brown, the observing homeroom teacher, and the students all learn something about learning to write.

At noon Ms. Brown visits the custodian and asks if he will "adopt" a third-grader who needs encouragement in his reading. The custodian, assured that his main "instructional" responsibilities will be to smile and be impressed, agrees cheerfully. The food service workers look up from their chores to ask if they can adopt students too, and Ms. Brown promises to find them some readers. On the way to the teacher's lounge, she tells the reading teacher about the custodian and asks for referrals for the food service workers as well. As she passes a tutor's classroom, he hails her in and invites her to a small "reading celebration" with Tiffany, a struggling first grader who is ready to read her "shared story" to an audience. After Tiffany's impromptu performance, Ms. Brown offers suitable accolades and finds a Charlie Brown sticker in her pocket for the celebrant. Ms.

Brown reports to Tiffany that the tutor often mentions how well she is doing and how pleased he is with her progress.

This noon hour medley of activities is part of Ms. Brown's strategy for building professional relationships with the teachers. She meets with teachers often informally, in the halls, the lounge, the office, the supply room and, if circumstances permit, trades observations and anecdotes: "Tavon loves his dinosaur book....Jessica read me her last shared story...You've really made great progress with Denise--the story you helped her write is funny...Have you noticed that Sam gets along too well with his reading partner? Maybe he'd do more work with someone else." Teachers will ask for supplies or advice or an audience for a celebration--gifts usually within Ms. Brown's power to give.

After a brief lunch break, Ms. Brown joins the Family Support Team. In addition to the principal, members include a tutor, the master teacher, the parent liaison, and the counselor. Most of the time discussions revolve around issues of attendance, behavior, health, and academic progress, sometimes at the organizational level, but more often with regard to individual students referred by teachers. Today a fifth-grade teacher with two troublesome students describes her problem. The counselor has been involved for a few days already, so he reports on his own unobtrusive data-collecting activities. Together the group devises two plans, one for each offender. The counselor will invite the parents in and develop a home-based reward system to support school efforts. The master teacher reports that the fourth grade team has requested a meeting to resolve some placement and pacing problems in reading. She and Ms. Brown set a time to meet with them. The principal will join that meeting at the end to hear its decisions and provide the support that

may be required.

About fifteen minutes after the dismissal bell rings, Ms. Brown sits down with the second grade teachers to review the new writing units. They discuss the impact of a recent influx of transfer students and decide how to form new reading groups on the basis of the most recent assessment information. They agree about the implications of the scores and their respective observations of students and new class lists are finished quickly.

At 4:00 Ms. Brown goes down to the main office, where a typewriter is now free for her to use to write the short observation memo generated by the early visit to third grade. In response to a question from the principal, Ms. Brown shares with him her pleasure in the quality of the teacher's work, being quite specific about her use of a related story for listening comprehension and effective support for teamwork. (In her first year, this teacher has had some foreseeable but worrisome struggles with classroom management; it therefore seems important to celebrate the strengths she has gained.) As they leave, the principal and Ms. Brown make an appointment to review the progress of reading groups school-wide and Ms. Brown mentions the meeting the master teacher and she have scheduled with the fourth grade team.

Like the teachers with whom they work, most facilitators find that their days are filled with activity; they have little time to plan, prepare, or reflect. Consequently, like most teachers, they bring home work to do after dinner or on weekends.

How does the work of a facilitator contribute to the success of an individual child? Let's consider the case of Donnell*. Donnell has almost caught up to his second-grade

*The case of "Donnell" is a composite of several cases. However, actual cases in *Success For All* schools are often as complicated as this invented one.

classmates in reading, but when he started first grade all the signs pointed to trouble. Ms. Brown first noticed his name while reviewing initial reading test scores early in September. His score was among the lowest. Conferring with the teacher-tutor who administered the test and Donnell's homeroom teacher, Ms. Brown learned that Donnell was cheerful, outgoing, articulate in social conversation--and much too distractable to thrive in the busy, open space of his homeroom. His kindergarten teacher commented that he had responded well to structured lessons and one-to-one attention during the previous year. No one thought him deficient in ability, but everyone foresaw academic problems.

Ms. Brown assigned Donnell to Ms. White's small reading group, the lowest-performing group in his grade. The class met in a colorful, orderly room with a door that closed. Ms. White, a teacher-tutor, was as effective in teaching self-management as she was in teaching reading. At the request of Ms. Brown, she had been given the lowest performing group because she had a gift for teaching them. Donnell did very well in her care. Because his level was so low, Ms. Brown gave him one of the program's tutoring slots. For an additional 20 minutes a day, Donnell worked with a teacher-tutor developing the skills to hasten his mastery of reading. His progress was steady in first grade. Though he did not advance to grade level, he read with increasing confidence and satisfaction. The next year, Ms. Brown made sure he was included in the small group of second graders assigned to continue with the carefully structured beginning reading program. By mid-year, he had overtaken his classmates and moved into a higher reading group.

Besides monitoring his placement, Ms. Brown worked in two other ways to facilitate Donnell's success. First she acted as a teacher consultant. Within a couple of month's of Donnell's initial placement with Ms. White, Ms. Brown realized that Ms. White was so painstakingly thorough in her presentations that student diagnostic tests showed they were dancing ahead of her in the curriculum. Ms. Brown reviewed the evidence with her and they decided that students would have a better chance of catching up to grade level if Ms. White streamlined the lessons and pushed the pace a little faster. The teacher decided which of the practice elements could be shortened or cut out and, with Ms. Brown's confident encouragement, tailored the lessons so that instruction became more productive.

The following year, two different consultant activities developed: training and advising. When Donnell was ready to move into the on-grade reading group, Ms. Brown's attention was drawn to the struggles of the prospective receiving teacher. The teacher had transferred in late, missed the start-up training, and was still trying to figure out how to implement the program effectively. Adding a new, distractable student to compound her problems did not seem a supportive act. Donnell remained in his now too low but still comfortable group. Meanwhile, Ms. Brown concentrated on the receiving teacher, Mrs. Jones, who had asked for help with planning teamwork and for demonstrations of certain of the lesson components. While they worked together, Mrs. Jones pointed out that a major problem in the second grade was overcrowding--the school needed another second-grade homeroom.

As a program specialist, Ms. Brown sometimes acts as an informal advisor to the principal, and in that role, she wrote a formal letter explaining how the overcrowding was hurting students like Donnell. The principal had from the first made it clear to her that

such formal communications were a welcome support for his lobbying efforts at the central office and sometimes he even suggested that she write them. The principal appended this letter to his request for a new position. In a few weeks, Mrs. Jones had learned what she needed to know about implementation and the newly hired second-grade teacher was on staff. (This time her colleagues, with their own assignments well underway, were glad to be part of a training team for her.) All homeroom and reading class sizes were brought to manageable levels, and Donnell was, at last, welcomed into the new reading group.

Because some of Donnell's academic problems had arisen from conditions outside the classroom, the facilitator's job included helping the family support team to remove as much of this interference as possible. For one thing, Donnell himself was too often absent--attendance was a major concern. For another, the way he acted made teachers worry about his general health. These issues were raised in meetings of the family support team at the request of his homeroom teacher. The attendance monitor investigated his attendance record and discovered a pattern of Monday absences and frequent tardiness. The nurse reviewed his medical records, conducted some routine evaluations, and discovered a significant visual impairment. As a member of the team, Ms. Brown invited the mother in to discuss these findings and arranged for the teacher to attend the meeting. The team suggested ways to obtain free vision testing and glasses (from the local Lions Club) and worked out a plan to improve Donnell's attendance.

Donnell's success is a direct result of the efforts of his teachers, who use their professional expertise to implement a program designed with his learning needs in mind. The job of the facilitator in *Success For All* is to help teachers find the program's best

expression in local terms. In the beginning, the facilitator provides the support necessary to help teachers learn new procedures and content. As experience develops, however, facilitators continue to explore how the essential elements may best be implemented by particular teachers under particular, ever-changing conditions. Part of this general support includes ongoing coordination of services to individual children, so that each one enters class ready and able to learn.

Urban elementary schools are complex places and improving them requires making complex changes. Much of the meaning of these changes cannot be known until they are undertaken. In the actual process of change, new meanings are developed by individuals (Fullan, 1982, p. 79). As the authors of one landmark study of innovation put it, "It takes people to help people change" (Crandall & Loucks, 1983, p. 26). In *Success For All*, the person in charge of helping people change is the facilitator.

In Fullan's terms, *Success For All* facilitators address daily the issues of goodness of fit and practicality. They point out how *Success For All*'s features are related to the problems of teaching and learning that have defeated both students and teachers. They find the specific answers to specific questions or help the staff develop specific answers. They understand how to use the program's complex parts to fix complex problems. By continually reviewing and synthesizing what they learn from all the teachers they see, facilitators make implementation a practical reality. In addition, facilitators communicate information about needed program changes directly to developers for speedy resolution.

At the school level, facilitators support the work of teachers and principals. The scope of their activities makes it possible for facilitators to learn how to help principals

integrate the program into the culture of the school and provide good supervision to staff. Teachers come to depend on facilitators to arrange for coaching, to celebrate talent, to share happy events and offer uncritical help in solving problems. Because facilitators reduce the complications that interfere with student learning and with teaching, teachers gain confidence that the new program can be effective, that their professional contributions will have a chance to add up, that their students will succeed.

At the district level, the facilitators' influence is more variable. To counter the habit of skepticism learned from past change efforts, facilitators have only the strategy of improving the climate so it better nurtures feelings of professional efficacy. Since they are usually drafted soon after the adoption decision, they are in a better position than many teachers to understand how the decision was made and thus, to explain to others both the decision-making process and the merits of the program. While their organizational power is hardly sufficient to prompt active engagement of people in the superintendent's office, they do occasionally have opportunities to orient central office staff and to call on their services. Facilitators are part of the on-going staff development process, not only directly, by providing instruction, but also indirectly, by arranging opportunities for teachers to work with each other. Facilitators cannot usually control the setting of timelines, but their efforts can make it easier for teachers to turn on a quarter (if not on a dime) and make it more certain that teacher concerns are raised in the right places and addressed as part of implementation.

Finally, facilitators can help consultants focus their attention on the areas of implementation that will most benefit from outside help. They can arrange for exchanges of feedback among teachers and consultants so that program development accommodates the experiences of the field.

Without a facilitator or someone acting in a similar role, *Success For All* probably wouldn't work, or wouldn't work for very long. There are too many demands on the time and attention of teachers and administrators in inner-city elementary schools and too many ways for things to go wrong. Only by having a "professional troubleshooter" on the spot, someone who is thoroughly familiar with both the school and the program, someone whose only responsibility is to see that the program is implemented effectively, is it likely that such comprehensive change can be implemented and sustained.

In schools now piloting *Success For All*, facilitators are helping teachers find ways to capture the enthusiasm and optimism of students like Donnell and set them on the road to learning. With teachers and students doing their best work, the high hopes of every six-year-old can blossom into solid accomplishment and pride throughout their elementary years.

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